

Mouth Cancer

What to look out for

Mouth cancer is sometimes called oral cancer. It can affect any part of the mouth, including the lip, gums and tongue with the lining of the mouth being the most common site for this cancer. Over 150 people are diagnosed in Northern Ireland each year. It is more common in men than women and is rare in people under the age of 40.

The most common signs of mouth cancer are:

- An ulcer on the lip, tongue or in the mouth that doesn't heal within three weeks
- Pain in the mouth or earache that persists
- A white or red patch in the mouth that doesn't go away
- A lump or thickening in the mouth, throat or on the lip
- Difficulty or pain with chewing, swallowing or speaking
- Bleeding or numbness in the mouth
- A lump in the neck
- Loose teeth for no obvious reason
- A lot of weight loss over a short space of time

These symptoms are common in conditions other than cancer. **However**, it is important to talk to your dentist or doctor without delay if symptoms last longer than three weeks. Mouth cancer can be treated **much** more successfully when it is diagnosed early.

Are you at risk from Mouth Cancer?

(Circle your answers and check it out)

Do you visit the dentist?

- A. Often
- B. Sometimes
- C. Never

Do you smoke?

- A. Never
- B. Sometimes
- C. Often

Do you drink alcohol?

- A. Never
- B. Sometimes
- C. Often

Do you eat five portions of fruit & vegetables daily?

- A. Often
- B. Sometimes
- C. Never

Do you use sunscreen regularly on your lips?

- A. Often
- B. Sometimes
- C. Never

All A's - Your risk is low **Mostly B's** - Your risk is moderate **Any C's** - Your risk is higher

more 

Lifestyle has a big effect on our risk of mouth cancer:

- Smoking or chewing tobacco
- Regularly drinking large amounts of alcohol, especially spirits. Three quarters of mouth cancers are caused by both smoking and drinking
- Recently, a link with the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) has been reported
- Over-exposure to sunshine or use of sunbeds is a known risk for cancer of the lip

You can help reduce your risk by:

- Checking for changes in your mouth and having regular dental check ups
- Thinking about getting help to stop smoking or chewing tobacco
- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink
- Eating at least 5 different portions of fruit and vegetables daily
- Applying a sun protection (SPF) factor 15 -30 regularly on the lips if outdoors
- Not using a sunbed
- Taking regular exercise – at least 30 minutes daily.

How can the Ulster Cancer Foundation help?

UCF provides information and support to people worried about, or affected by cancer.

You can phone us free on our cancer information helpline if you:

- Are worried about any of the symptoms listed in this leaflet?
- Would like help to stop smoking?
- Would like to talk to someone for emotional support for yourself or your family?
- Would like to know more about the range of both support services and cancer prevention activities available from the charity?

Freephone Information & Support Helpline:

0800 783 3339

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